

Tips on Apple Trees by Derry Walsh, SSGC May 28, 2014

What to do in your orchard after bloom? This year was a very good year only one huge downpour in the third week of April.

1) cut out or squish Apple Ermin Moth (grey-green caterpillars in small webs) or Tent caterpillars (orange-yellow hairy in larger webs).

2) fertilize – one should have had 12-16" of new growth in 2013. Should fertilize in early Spring. Amount of fertilizer depends on age of tree, condition of tree, amount of new growth in 2013.

If you haven't fertilized this year do it now, include Dolomite lime. I put one pound of Dolomite Lime per tree and two lbs for Cox's Orange and CO crosses. Remember CO are 'limey' trees. They need lime to grow well here.

Ideally put dolomite lime on in February and then put your fertilizer on in March for best results.

Keep fertilizer at the drip line and beyond, not close to the trunk

If we don't have rain within a day, water the fertilizer into the ground, ditto the Dolomite lime

3) thin – when the apple is $\frac{3}{4}$ " or in early June, again late June, again late July – cut off with scissors/pruners! Don't yank off the apples! Fruit bud initiation occurs from bloom time until about June 20, the longest day of the year.

If you do not thin by mid-June you will have very few apples in 2015. This is 'biennial bearing': huge crop one year and none the next year.

Start with Bramley's Seedling, a very popular English cooking apple: B S has a very short stem and if you don't thin while the young apples are able to be separated, you'll lose both apples in the cluster.

If the apple is big, but has an average or long stem (Belle de B or Jonagold), thin later the final size of the ripe B de B or JOG will be smaller.

- a) downward facing branches do not produce good apples
- b) deformed apple – comes from poor pollination, bug bites
- c) apples in shade do not produce good apples

4) prune out dead or dying branches while you are working

(slip #5 in here if I have time)

5) When to pick your apples

- a) when the background colour changes from green to light green
- b) before the pests move in (crows, cutworms). Apples will continue to ripen whether you like it or not, so take them off the tree before the pests get them.
- c) when the apple comes off when lifted to 45 degrees (some varieties only)

There is no such thing as a tree-ripened, unsprayed, unblemished apple. Even one which has been bagged will have some earwig nibbles.

d) Starch-Iodine test. When picked, the apple will have quite a bit of starch in the flesh. In storage or on the tree this converts to sugar. Buy a bottle of iodine and cut the apple in half and put a drop of iodine in the flesh, not near the core, but near the edge and you'll see how ripe the apple is. Dark blue colour indicates presence of starch. Pick the apple when there is still some starch (dark blue) showing on the outer edge of the apple, but no starch at the core.

If there is no blue colour showing with the application of iodine, the apple is over-ripe, must be eaten right away, and will not store well.

<http://www.omafra.gov.on.ca/english/crops/facts/00-025.htm>

If the apple is green and has no starch then it did not get enough sunlight to produce starch. Prune the tree to open up the hidden areas to sunlight.